



# Top 10

*Frequently Asked Questions*

**For Solar Hot Water  
and Solar Power**



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## 1. Is the company reputable?

These days there are many options for who you can deal with in the 'eco' sector. Unfortunately the industry has been known for its boom-to-bust cycle so there have been many companies who have shut down as quickly as they opened.

Currently, there is a price war which is occurring for all of the companies who lack the history in this industry to have earned themselves a good reputation. We always recommend you stick with a well established and well known brand that has a long proven history to back them up as this tends to indicate they will be around for a long time to come.

For solar hot water look for Australian made and ask around to see what most people choose to buy so you know it's a safe choice.

For solar power, the majority of products come from China so do your research on the manufacturers credentials, but most importantly check who the company is representing the product here in Australia as that will tell you a lot about the level of quality and reliability of the product. [Back to the top](#)

## 2. What Price should I pay for my system?

There is a wide range of pricing in the current market for both solar hot water and solar power, ranging from the cheap budget products to the premium end with a higher price tag. What you pay for a product should reflect what your individual requirements are for your home. Not everybody fits into the small solar systems that you see offered by most companies in the industry, so don't be deceived by these advertisements with low entry prices suggesting a small system suits everybody.

If the product has proven history, a solid background, is proven to be a quality product (not just because a salesman says it is without the facts, ask for evidence!) and also isn't the most expensive then you should be on a winner. [Back to the top](#)

*“you definitely get what you pay for”*



### 3. What do I need to know about the Installation?

The impact on your home is a very important point to take note of as it isn't something a lot of people think about until it's too late (after the installation and potential damage has been done).

Cheaper systems in solar hot water are well known to be poorly made to keep manufacturing costs down and one example we found in our research is that a cheap imported product requires up to 16 holes drilled into a tile roof to secure the system compared with only 2 holes for a reputable brand.

This is highly concerning because for every additional hole drilled in your roof means you have increased chances of the roof leaking which can cause internal damage to ceilings and timber frame work.

It is also important to ask whether the copper piping is 'hard' copper and does the installer weld each join. If they are using soft copper with rubber connections these perish over time which again adds risk of hot water leaking in your roof cavity.

For both solar hot water and solar power, make sure the installers are registered tradesmen with a current BSA licence. This will protect you if for any reason something goes wrong on the job. Unfortunately we have found many times that some companies who are selling very cheap systems usually are doing this by sacrificing the quality of the installation as well. It isn't uncommon to find that the installers are just tradesmen or apprentices without supervision. [Back to the top](#)

### 4. How much will I save on my bills?

This can vary immensely depending on the following:

- The level of quality of the system
- How many people in your home
- How much your electricity bill costs

For solar hot water conversion from electric hot water you can usually expect to save between 55%-85% off your current water heating costs. If you convert from gas hot water the savings will usually be greater, especially if you convert from LPG gas.

For solar power, apart from requiring the correct roof to use for the application and depending on your budget you can save 100% off your electricity costs, you can even go into credit where you earn money. If your roof is small or you have a limited budget, you will still save more money from installing solar power than putting the money in a savings account at the bank.

If your roof faces between North East and North West it will perform at its optimum, if it's West or East facing then the performance will be decreased. You can install stands that help to pitch the panels towards North if need be. Installing solar hot water and solar power systems is proven to increase your properties value too through the Home Energy Star Rating Scheme. [Back to the top](#)

*“depending on  
your budget you  
can save 100%”*

## 5. How long will the system last?

This is very much dependant on the quality of the system and the manufacturers stated average life expectancy for their systems.

You will find that there is only a couple of solar hot water companies in the industry who can state what their average life span actually is due to no other companies having operated long enough to work this out.

We know that for the leading solar hot water brand in Australia they state their average life span for a roof mounted system is 22 to 28 years. The cheap imports state they only last an average of 10-15 years.

Solar power again very much depends on the level of quality of the system and the manufacturers history in the market place. One Energy supplier well known in Brisbane supplied a product that had a poor fail rate, yet there are other products manufactured in China that we have found to be clear leaders in the industry for their manufacturing capabilities.

Solar panels are expected to last on average 30 years plus and inverters can range from average life of 5 to 15 years. There are extended warranty options for inverters that consumers can usually choose to purchase later if they want to for up to 25 years warranty.

The cheap solar panels and inverters are commonly failing much sooner than the above averages. [Back to the top](#)

*“Solar panels are expected to last 30 years plus”*

## 6. How can I be sure that what I am being told is true?

Research the suppliers you are looking to deal with carefully. Don't just take their word for it.

Look carefully at what products they choose to recommend to you. There are many different unknown brand names for solar power, just ask for proof on as much information as possible about the manufacturers history and manufacturing standards. If the supplier is proud of their product they should have a lot of formal information they can share with you. If they just verbally tell you how great the product is but don't back it up with facts on paper, it's best to stay away from them.

For solar hot water, stick with a reputable Australian made manufacturer as there are a number of imported products coming into the market that are not necessarily designed for Australian conditions. Generally the imports are designed to fit a set budget and shelf life, instead of designing it to perform the best here in Australia and last a long time.

Ask how long the supplier has been operating for. If less than 3 years take care, we advise to look elsewhere as many operators get involved just while the rebates are available and leave again once they finish. Ask if the supplier has the necessary licenses. All installers need to be qualified plumbers/electricians and the business must have their own BSA license for Queensland regulations. [Back to the top](#)

## 7. How will the system look on my roof?

This will depend on what roof is most suitable for the best performance of the system and therefore how visible this roof is from ground level and the street. To see pictures of solar installations, [click here](#).

For Solar power the panels sit low against the roof and are usually dark in colour. For solar hot water you can choose between the popular roof mounted system (tank on the roof), a split system (panels only on the roof) or alternatively if you don't want any panels on your roof at all for your hot water you can choose a heat pump.

Usually the panels can be visible, but it has become acceptable for homes to have these systems on their roof so for most people the aesthetics isn't much of a concern anymore. [Back to the top](#)

## 8. Am I eligible for all of the rebates?

There are many generous rebates available currently still for both solar hot water and solar power, particularly for electric hot water conversions.

For solar hot water there are 3 rebates:

- Federal Government \$1000 (if claimed insulation rebate this rebate isn't available a second time, heat pumps also only eligible for \$600 instead of \$1000)
- Queensland State Government rebate \$600 + \$400 extra if a pension/seniors card holder.
- STC rebate. This amount can fluctuate depending on market conditions including demand levels at any given time but at time of printing the value per certificate is \$26 so you can expect at least \$700.

If you are converting from gas hot water to solar hot water or heat pump, or replacing an existing solar hot water system you are not eligible for the Federal or State Government rebates, only the STC rebate.

For solar power, there is two incentives:

1. STC rebate. This is also currently valued at \$26 per certificate at time of printing so depending on the system size you purchase you should receive between \$2366 to \$4290. If the market conditions change this amount can fluctuate either with an increase or decrease.

2. Feed in tariff for QLD.

The feed-in tariff rates for solar power are also one of the highest in the country, offering at least 44 cents per Kilowatt hour contributed to the power grid, with some electricity retailers offering up to 52 cents.

The less power you can manage to use during the day time when the sun is shining on the solar panels the better return on investment you will achieve. [Back to the top](#)

## 9. How safe is the warranty?

There is a lot of scepticism with many companies offering 'performance warranties' which suggest the system will perform at certain percentages over a nominated period of time. We have researched many companies warranty terms and conditions and found that it is very common for there to be clauses where the manufacture can easily void the warranty, leaving the consumer with nothing if anything fails with the system.

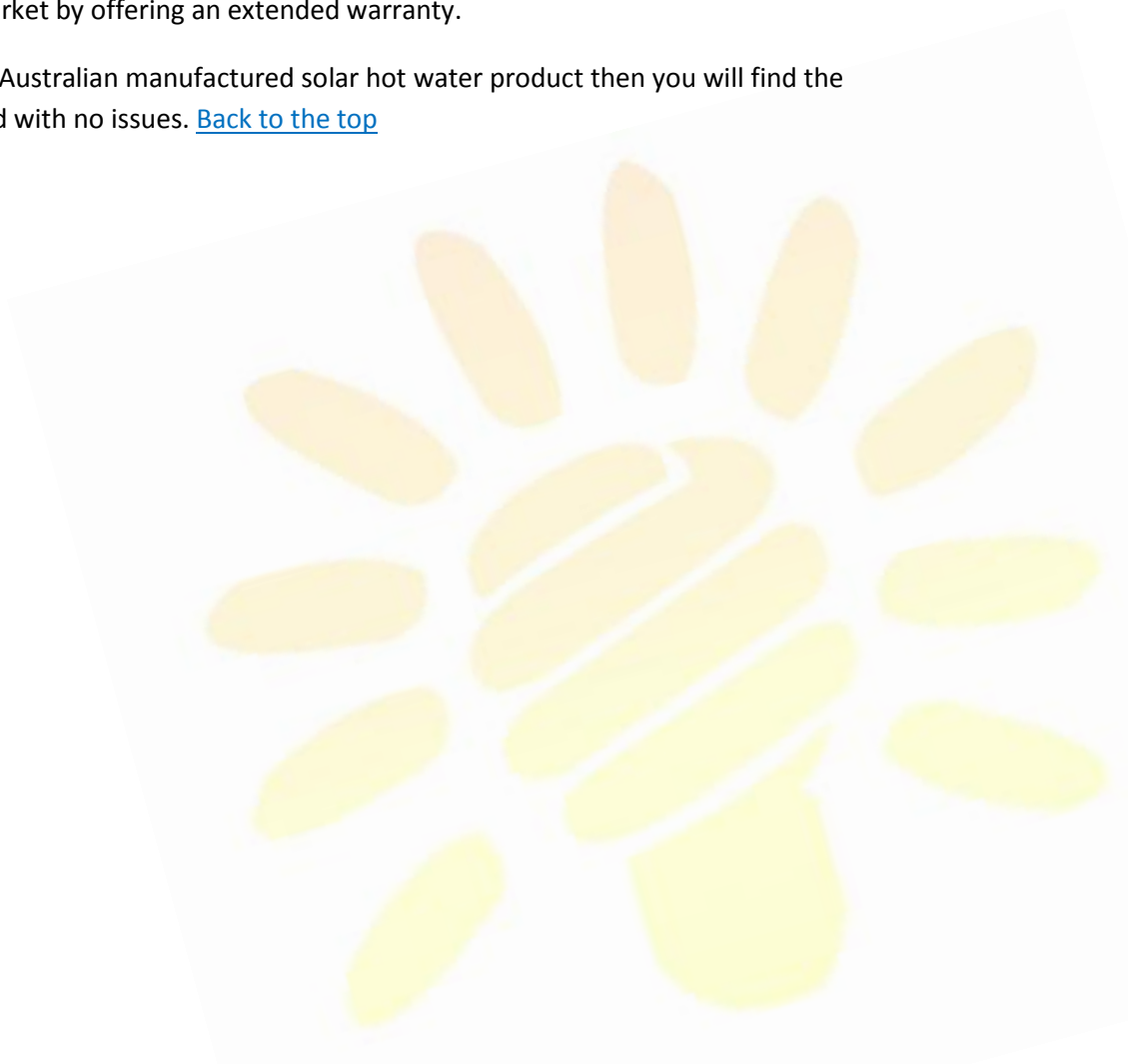
It is also common if the manufacturer doesn't have direct representation here in Australia, they will expect you as the consumer to foot the bill for freight to send the failed panel(s) back to China for repair or replacement. Make sure the manufacturer of your solar panels has an Australian-based representative to help you if you need assistance.

Out of all the companies we researched we only found a hand full that offer genuine warranties that consumers can feel confident with. One of these is a reputable Australian company who have been operating since 1953, so there is a lot of stability and confidence they will cover their warranty claims.

Solar hot water has a standard 5 year warranty in the industry. This is considered a good warranty period as normally something will go wrong within the first 5 years if it is going to go wrong from a manufacturing error.

You will find a few companies offering longer warranties than this but once you research the background of the company they are either new to the industry or a company that hasn't had much success in the industry so they are trying to compensate for their short falls and lack of brand confidence in the market by offering an extended warranty.

If you choose a local Australian manufactured solar hot water product then you will find the warranty is honoured with no issues. [Back to the top](#)



## 10. What product is best for me?

It is very important to ask yourself what is most important to you when making your purchase decision. How long do you want the system to last and how well do you want it to perform.

Depending on your budget you can then work out whether you want a product that is value for money or simply a product that is cheap with no proven history or a reduced life span. There can be a huge difference between the two and when choosing a cheap product you must take into account that you may experience problems fairly early on in the life of the system.

A product that has a good solid reputation will generally always be hassle free so for most people they understand you need to pay the extra money to have this peace of mind.

For solar power the finished product itself looks very much the same from each manufacturer, but the differences come from the quality of the raw materials and the manufacturing processes which can differ immensely.

Solar hot water has a number of different materials to achieve a similar result. There are steel tanks with ceramic lining, stainless steel, glass lined tanks and evacuated tubes.

It is well known that the key reason a hot water cylinder fails is due to the tank rusting internally due to storing water for a long period of time at a high temperature with the added mix of water impurities such as chlorine/fluoride as well as pockets of oxygen.

All cylinder style tanks have weld points, which create a weak point for the tank. No matter what the material is e.g. stainless steel, if the weld point is not completely sealed and protected from contact with the water then the weld point will fail at some point due to rust.

Research tells us that the ceramic lined tank tends to be the most effective long term as the ceramic lining creates protection between the tank and the stored water which means very low risk of rusting internally.

Evacuated tubes are made in China, they perform well in colder climates like Melbourne where it is common to have cloud cover and cool temperatures but they can over perform in climates like Queensland which causes large amounts of water dumping so water is wasted. Our research has found that the tubes are more fragile than flat plate panels so there is an increased risk of breakage during hail storms.

We suggest choosing a product that has proven results of longevity and is designed for your local conditions. [Back to the top](#)